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PROQUEST DISSERTATIONS & THESES INSTITUTION USE CASE

Energize Undergrad Scholarship

The University of Hawai’i, West O’ahu introduces dissertations to undergraduate students, expanding their sense for information literacy

***Alphie Garcia** is the Lead for the library collection development for the Humanities and Creative Media division. As an extension of that work, he is often in the Literature 100-level classes introducing students to ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. Several years ago, the University Research and Services System offered additional funds to individual campuses for reinforcing their digital infrastructure. In response, the faculty broadly requested the purchase of ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. So, the library purchased PQDT—and has helped implement broad use of the database across the Humanities Departments.*

Alphie Garcia

University of Hawai’i, West O’ahu

Information Resources and
Collection Management Librarian,
James & Abigail Library

At the University of Hawai’i, West O’ahu, the Humanities division invites Alphie Garcia to its Literature 100 and 200-level classes to introduce ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global as a trusted source for both current and historic research. Garcia is pleased to present the dissertations as “coming from a University Press,” and he makes the point that each one had to go through a committee of professors to get final approval. “We hold it in the same regard as a journal [article] when we introduce it,” Garcia says.

Since students in 100 and 200-level courses are new to university-level research, Garcia has found that educating students on dissertations early-on helps them to overcome two obstacles. At first glance, students worry about the length of the papers. However, this is easily overcome—as Garcia points out—by teaching students to use them just like they would a book from the library. He teaches students to refer to the Table of Contents to find chapters relevant to their topic, and then head straight there.



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Secondly, freshman and sophomore students can be quite intimidated by the language in the papers and need help navigating that initial read. Since that first encounter is often lead by the librarian, they provide a bit of coaching and guidance. He acknowledges that “the language that suits the rigor of the argument” can be “intimidating at the early stages” of students’ college life. But he encourages students to anticipate growth in their understanding and acquisition of the language used in their discipline. “It’s to be anticipated that they find it difficult at first—but growth is expected. That’s what college is for!”

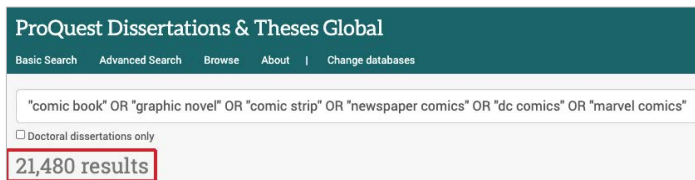
Subsequently, there is evidence that students grow into a comfort level with rigorous scholarly language. Many UHWO students learn to navigate the PQDT database and return to it throughout their college years.

“PQDT Global is a great database. We’re happy to use it!”

– Alphia Garcia, University of Hawai‘i, West O‘ahu

As students grow comfortable in academia, they often find an avenue for researching some pretty unique subjects. In one of the university’s 400-level linguistics classes, the professor and students were comparing a pidgeon-Creole specific to Hawaii with Creole dialects in other parts of the United States, and there happened to be a great paper on the Hawaiian Creole in the PQDT database. Thereafter, that professor recommended

the ProQuest database to all her students as a great resource. As that class discovered, ProQuest includes the latest research on niche topics that have not yet made it into books or journal articles.



Even undergraduate students have found this to be true. Garcia recalls a Senior English major who was working on a capstone paper and needed information on comics—a very niche topic. Garcia encouraged the student to try the ProQuest database and, not surprisingly, there were many references on Spiderman and other characters. As Garcia expected, many “inspired Ph.D candidate[s] have dived into the symbolism and sociological implications of these characters.”

All of these use cases provide students with an expanded sense of information literacy: They learn about new and trustworthy sources of information. Most of all, they see the ongoing workings of a living scholarship—growing, evolving, and always adding new information to humanity’s pool of knowledge.

As Alphia Garcia says, “PQDT Global is a great database. We’re happy to use it!”

The University of Hawai‘i, West O‘ahu is a four-year, comprehensive university with an emphasis on baccalaureate education founded in the liberal arts, serving professional, career-related, and applied fields, based on State and regional needs. UH West O‘ahu is ranked #16 in Regional Colleges West by the U.S. News & World Report. They rank #7 in Best Colleges for Veterans, #23 in Top Performers on Social Mobility, and #3 in Top Public Schools. The total enrollment in the Fall of 2020 was 3,168.

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